

## Armadillo Distribution in Alabama and Northwest Florida

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IN 1952, Fitch, Goodrum, and Newman published the results of an extensive survey on armadillo distribution in the southeastern United States. At that time there were no records of the species in the Florida panhandle west of Hamilton County. A small colony in southeastern Alabama, which apparently resulted from the introduction of a single pregnant female near Foley, was reported. Subsequent publications (Neill, 1952; Buchanan and Talmage, 1954) indicate that the introduced population in the Florida peninsula has extended its range westward as far as Wakulla County, and report specimens in south Alabama, on both sides of Mobile Bay (Fig. 1). Holliman (1963) noted a specimen from Jackson County, Alabama and stated that the species was found throughout the southern tier of counties.

Collecting records and observations since 1966 show that the species is now widespread and locally abundant in south Alabama as far north as Wilcox County, and common in the western part of the Florida panhandle. These records are summarized herein to update information available on the distribution and status of the armadillo in the area indicated.

### DISTRIBUTION

Armadillo records from south Alabama and western Florida are shown in Fig. 1. Most are based on observations alone, but specimens are available in some cases. Letters in parentheses placed

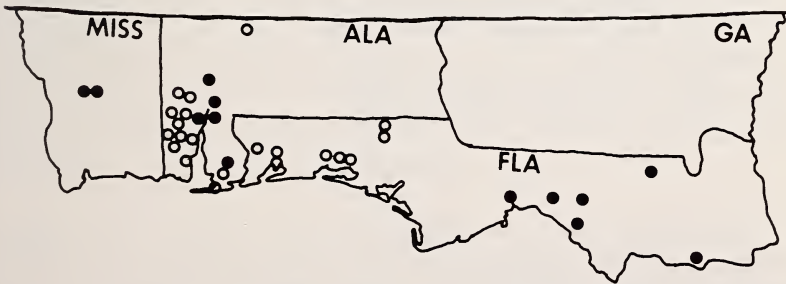


Fig. 1. Armadillo distribution records in northwest Florida and south Alabama. Open circles, new records; solid circles, previous reports (Fitch et al., 1952; Neill, 1952; Buchanan and Talmage, 1954; Holliman, 1963).

after the localities listed indicate collections in which the specimens are located as follows: (DWL) collection of Donald W. Linzey at the University of South Alabama; (UA) University of Alabama Mammal Collection; (MSU) Mississippi State University Mammal Collection.

### Alabama

#### Mobile County

- Old Shell Rd., 3 mi. W Mobile city limits (DWL)
- County route 96 in Citronelle (DWL)
- Route 96 at Escatawpa River (DWL)
- Route 217, 1.5 mi. N Georgetown (DWL)
- Route 98, 2 mi. W Wilmer (DWL)
- Route 21, at jct. of Route 217 (DWL)
- Route 45, at Seabury's Creek in Kushla (DWL)
- Route 163, 5 mi. N Alabama Port

#### Washington County

- Route 17, 7 mi. S Chatom (MSU)
- Route U. S. 43, 5.8 mi. N McIntosh

#### Wilcox County

- Route 5, 12 mi. NE Thomasville (MSU)

#### Baldwin County

- Route 59, at Gulf Shores
- Route 180, near Ft. Morgan

### Florida

#### Escambia County

- Route 191, near Molino

#### Santa Rosa County

- Route 191, 5 mi. S Milton (Photograph in *Milton Press-Gazette*, 25 Aug. 1966)
- Route I-10, 7 mi. SW Milton

#### Okaloosa County

- Eglin AFB Reservation, R 22W; T 1S

#### Walton County

- Eglin AFB Reservation, R 21W; T 1S
- Eglin AFB Reservation, R 20W; T 1N

#### Holmes County

- Route U. S. 90 near Ponce De Leon
- Route 81, 2 mi. N route U. S. 90

## DISCUSSION

The population now existing in south Alabama and western Florida probably originated from the introduction near Foley, Alabama. Foley is near the center of this colony, and the first records in western Alabama are just north of Mobile Bay (Buchanan and Talmage, 1954), where crossing the Mobile River could have been

easily accomplished. Fitch et al. (1952) stated that water is not a serious barrier to armadillo distribution and even may aid in their dispersal on occasion. The possibility of additional introductions into parts of southern Alabama also exists, but there are no reports of this having occurred.

Buchanan and Talmage (1954) suggest that an eventual link-up will occur between the Florida and Alabama colonies and the western population which now extends into central Mississippi (Fitch et al., 1952; Crain and Cliburn, 1965). The recent spread of the species into western Florida has reduced the gap in the central part of the panhandle to about 100 miles. The distance between the populations in southwestern Alabama and east-central Mississippi may be even less. A continuous armadillo population around the Gulf Coast in the near future seems inevitable.

Most of the specimens observed were in either pine flatwoods or pine-turkey oak habitats (Laessle, 1942). Neill (1952) listed these among habitats favored by armadillos in the Florida peninsula. These two plant associations are common in the presently unoccupied areas of the Florida panhandle and southeastern Mississippi.

No ecological or physiographic barriers which might check the spread of the species into these areas are apparent.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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#### SUMMARY

Armadillos are now abundant in south Alabama on both sides of Mobile Bay and extend as far northward as Wilcox County. Specimens are also reported from Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Wal-

ton, and Holmes counties in western Florida. This population probably originated from an introduction near Foley, Alabama, but the possibility of other introductions in the area also exists. The unoccupied areas between this population, the one in the Florida peninsula, and the main population which extends eastward into east-central Mississippi, are now small and will presumably be invaded in the near future as no apparent ecological barriers exist.

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